

Walleyes for Tomorrow maintains walleye stock in Green Lake

By Tony Daley

Keeping the walleye population thriving in Green Lake County is a big part of the Walleyes for Tomorrow organization.

The Green Lake chapter has maintained a longtime operation for raising fish to stock Big Green.

The Green Lake Sanitary District Fish Rearing Facility has supporting partners including the City of Green Lake, Green Lake County, fishing guides Norton & Walker, Green Lake Association, and Wisconsin DNR in addition to Walleyes for Tomorrow.

The Green Lake Walleyes for Tomorrow chapter initiative is to help correct natural disruptions that have caused a lack of natural reproduction, said chapter chair Aaron Anderson.

Walleyes for Tomorrow releases fry fish as part of a re-stocking solution to problems including heavy fishing and runoff into Green Lake.

Anderson said that the lake used to have a “fantastic walleye fishery” offering many chances for trophy-class catches.

However, anglers getting smarter with technologies such as locators eventually led to heavy fishing and stock depletion.

Another problem was what Anderson called a “serious phosphorous issue with runoff into Green Lake.”



GREEN LAKE REPORTER PHOTO

THE GREEN LAKE SANITARY DISTRICT Fish Rearing Facility is used by Walleyes for Tomorrow for its long-standing lake-stocking operations.

Anderson said that the lake, the deepest in the state, has “water retention” of around 26 years, similar to that of Lake Huron, so what disrupts water quality one year will linger for a long time.

In the case of harmful runoff, the phosphorous, Anderson said, has in Big Green generated “tremendous algae blooms,” which have in turn disrupted spawning cycles and affected population dispersal.

“Walleyes trying to spawn go up on rock shoals, but algal blooms get

so thick, they smother and cover the eggs so they can not get aeration and wave action and wash like they’re supposed to be getting in nature,” Anderson said.

He added that Walleyes for Tomorrow has been running the Green Lake hatchery for 18 years “to augment what Mother Nature can not successfully pull off in Green Lake anymore.”

The fish rearing facility includes technological resources such as an artesian well pump to feed a hold-

ing tank, which in case of power loss keeps eggs flushed, aerated, and mixed.

According to Anderson indicating on behalf of Walleyes for Tomorrow constituents, sometimes the general environmental factors need a helping hand from human beings.

“There used to be a walleye run up Silver Creek toward Ripon, but that’s nonexistent because of lack of water flow and not enough rain runoff in spring,” Anderson said.

The work of Walleyes for Tomorrow helps to ensure that a viable fishery and reproductive environment is successful and consistent in Green Lake.

According to Anderson, if the Green Lake Sanitary District Fish Rearing Facility did not exist, the walleye fishery would “crash in Green Lake” and anglers would have a hard time “finding individual fish to catch.”

However, with some technical tweaking, Big Green remains a vital resource for sports and recreation, and boasts many forage fish that serve as high-protein sources for walleye, which are predatory/opportunistic fish that eat “almost anything,” Anderson said, including crayfish, frogs, freshwater shrimp, insects, and even other walleyes.

Across the state, Walleyes for Tomorrow chapters have banquets to support fundraising, which pay for operating costs, and the organization is rich with partners who

have pooled stakeholder resources to sustain walleye environmental programs.

Anderson said that the Green Lake chapter’s work with its partners continues to yield good results for walleye health in the lake; specimens that were stained for tracking and retrieved by the Department of Natural Resources demonstrate robust numbers, numbers that should keep Green Lake a regional destination for walleye fishing.

Several specific techniques are used to maximize walleye success in Big Green, including releasing walleye fry in the later day or near dusk, done when Green Lake’s upper water layers are warmest.

These warmer upper layers of Green Lake attract an abundant food population of microorganisms, and the timing coincides with hours of reduced activity among predators which otherwise might devour fry.

These factors have facilitated the introduction of walleyes and allowed stock to rapidly grow and spread as a population, indicated Anderson, whose team continually analyzes data that quantify the effectiveness of hatchery operations by showing outcomes such as higher percentages of larger fish in size classes.

For more information on the Walleyes for Tomorrow Green Lake Chapter, contact chapter chairman Aaron Anderson, at (414) 531-0607 or by e-mail